

Opening Statement Chairman John Shimkus
The Role of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in America's Energy Future
May 4, 2011
(As Prepared for Delivery)

Nuclear power is vital to our economy, particularly in my home state of Illinois which boasts eleven operating nuclear reactors at six different locations. That's why the Nuclear Regulatory Commission plays a crucial role in ensuring that we meet our current and future energy needs without sacrificing safety or security.

Licensing of new plants and new reactor designs, re-licensing existing reactors, and considering the Department of Energy's application for a license to develop and operate a repository or storage site for spent fuel and high level waste that is away from reactor sites are all issues that the NRC Commissioners are called upon to weigh and decide using their best information, judgment, and expertise.

No one wants the NRC to rubberstamp any of these license applications. We want the NRC, instead to give each one the careful scrutiny that it deserves and only approve the applications that meet the rigorous safety and security standards that the Commission, itself, establishes.

But that means we expect the NRC to consider the applications and not just sit on them.

We also expect all Commissioners to be fully engaged in the policy decisions before the NRC. And right now we are not convinced Chairman Jazcko is respecting the roles of his fellow Commissioners as he should. This is deeply concerning to this Committee and should be to the Nation as a whole.

For any amateur mind-readers out there -- on or off the Commission -- I want to be clear: do not read into any of my remarks or questions a preference for a particular thumbs up or thumbs down on any adjudicatory matter before the Commission. You commissioners have the expertise. I only ask that the Commission follow its own established procedures, take up the work Federal law assigns you, and, when data are in, come to some explicit -- and timely -- resolution. I am not confident we are getting that today.

With that I want to welcome all the commissioners here with us today and look forward to hearing more details on their individual roles and the process for decision making at the commission.